

Having described the invention, the following is claimed:

1. A windshield curtain inflatable away from a roof of a vehicle to a position between a windshield of the vehicle and a vehicle occupant and between an instrument panel of the vehicle and the vehicle occupant, said windshield curtain comprising:

a center panel of material having a length and opposite first and second side portions extending along its length; and

first and second side panels each having a periphery, said periphery of said first side panel being interconnected with said center panel along said first side portion of said center panel, said periphery of said second side panel being interconnected with said center panel along said second side portion of said center panel.

2. The windshield curtain recited in claim 1, wherein each of said first and second side panels has a shape configured such that respective portions of its periphery follow a contour of a surface of the instrument panel, said portions of said peripheries

each having a first part shaped to follow a surface of the instrument panel presented generally toward an occupant of the vehicle, said portions of said peripheries each having a second part shaped to follow an upper surface of the instrument panel.

3. The windshield curtain recited in claim 1, wherein said first side panel is connected to said first side portion by a first connection, said first connection extending along the entire length of said first side portion and along the entire periphery of said first side panel;

said second side panel being connected to said second side portion by a second connection, said second connection extending along the entire length of said second side portion and along the entire periphery of said second side panel.

4. The windshield curtain recited in claim 1, wherein each of said first and second edge portions has a length, said length of said first edge portion being about equal to a length of the periphery of said first side panel, said length of said second edge portion

being about equal to a length of the periphery of said second side panel.

5. The windshield curtain recited in claim 1, wherein said center panel is arranged to form an endless loop of material.

6. The windshield curtain recited in claim 5, wherein said center panel comprises a length of material having opposite end portions spaced along its length, said opposite end portions of said center panel being arranged in an adjacent and overlying relationship with each other and interconnected to form said endless loop of material.

7. The windshield curtain recited in claim 6, wherein each of said end portions of said center panel has an opening extending through said center panel, said openings being aligned with each other when said end portions are interconnected to form said endless loop of material.

8. The windshield curtain recited in claim 7, further comprising a retainer portion having an inlet

portion and an outlet portion, said outlet portion extending through said aligned openings of said center panel and being interconnected with said overlying end portions of said center panel.

9. The windshield curtain recited in claim 8, wherein said outlet portion of said retainer portion is interconnected with said center panel along an entire periphery of said aligned openings.

10. The windshield curtain recited in claim 8, wherein said inlet portion of said retainer portion is adapted to receive a fill tube for delivering inflation fluid from an inflation fluid source into an inflatable volume of said windshield curtain to inflate said windshield curtain.

11. The windshield curtain recited in claim 8, wherein said retainer portion comprises overlying panels interconnected with each other along a portion of their respective peripheries, said panels of said retainer portion being interconnected within said peripheries to form connections for helping to direct inflation fluid into said windshield curtain.

12. The windshield curtain recited in claim 1, wherein said first and second side panels each have a generally rounded L-shaped configuration.

13. The windshield curtain recited in claim 1, wherein each of said first and second side panels has a first portion and a second portion extending transverse to said first portion, said first portions and portions of said center panel extending between said first portions helping to define a first chamber of said windshield curtain, said second portions and portions of said center panel extending between said second portions helping to define a second chamber of said windshield curtain, said first chamber being inflatable along a surface of an instrument panel presented generally toward the vehicle occupant, said second chamber being inflatable along the windshield and a surface of the instrument panel adjacent the windshield.

14. The windshield curtain recited in claim 13, wherein said second chamber has a tapered configuration in which said second chamber has a first width at a

location adjacent said first chamber, said second chamber being tapered down to a second width less than said first width at a location spaced from said first chamber.

15. The windshield curtain recited in claim 14, wherein each of said first and second side portions of said center panel has a cutout portion that reduces the width of said center panel and helps form the tapered configuration of said second chamber.

16. The windshield curtain recited in claim 1, wherein said windshield curtain when inflated extends between a passenger side A pillar and a longitudinal centerline of the vehicle.

17. The windshield curtain recited in claim 1, wherein said windshield curtain when inflated extends between a driver side A pillar and a longitudinal centerline of the vehicle.

18. The windshield curtain recited in claim 1, wherein said windshield curtain when inflated extends between a driver side A pillar and a longitudinal

centerline of the vehicle and between a passenger side A pillar and the longitudinal centerline of the vehicle.

19. The windshield curtain recited in claim 1, wherein said windshield curtain when inflated overlies at least a portion of an A pillar of the vehicle.

20. The windshield curtain recited in claim 1, wherein each of said first and second side panels has a first portion and a second portion extending transverse to said first portion, said first portions being shaped to extend along a surface of an instrument panel presented generally toward the vehicle occupant when said windshield curtain is inflated, said second portions being shaped to extend along an upper surface of the instrument panel when said windshield curtain is inflated, the upper surface of the instrument panel extending transverse to the surface presented toward a vehicle occupant.

21. The windshield curtain recited in claim 1, wherein said center panel has a width measured perpendicular to the length of said center panel, said

first and second side portions of said center panel each having a cutout portion that reduces the width of said center panel and thereby helps taper a width of said windshield curtain.